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ABSTRACT

A study was undertaken to determine the effectiveness of reading comprehension strategies in improving the reading skills of underprepared students at a community college. The instructional strategies, which included determining main ideas of passages, drawing inferences and conclusions, and building vocabulary within the context of readings, were implemented in a college-prep reading class of 28 students. Outcomes were measured by students' performance on Nelson-Denny and departmental reading tests administered at the beginning and end of the course. In addition, changes in students' attitudes toward reading were determined through responses on a teacher-prepared self-awareness survey distributed during the first and twelfth weeks of the class. Results included the following: (1) while only 4 of the 28 students received passing scores (i.e., 62% or higher) in reading comprehension on the departmental pre-test, 24 did so on the post-test; (2) although there was an average increase of 2.8% between the Nelson-Denny pre- and post-tests, the results were not significant; and (3) with respect to the frequency with which they practiced 10 effective reading behaviors on the self-awareness survey, only 4 students responded "often" on at least 80% of the questions at the beginning of the class, compared to 22 students at the end of the class. Contains 15 references. The survey instruments, reading guides describing the three strategies, and sample exercises are appended. (HAA)

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ED 399 991

IMPROVING COLLEGE-PREP STUDENTS' READING SKILLS THROUGH THE USE OF SELECTED COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

by

Evelyn Jordan

A Final Report submitted to the Faculty of the Fischler Center for the Advancement of Education of Nova Southeastern University in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Reading

The abstract of this report may be placed in the University database system for reference.

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Abstract

Development and Implementation of a Program for College-Prep Reading Students.
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Descriptors: College Students/Community Colleges/ Reading Comprehension/Reading Strategies/Skill Development/Remedial Reading/Reading Attitudes/ Comprehension Strategies.

This project involved the use of comprehension strategies based on the most recent research. The main idea, inference, and vocabulary-in-context strategies selected served as valuable tools for helping under-prepared students improve their reading skills. The target group for this project involved a college-prep reading class of 28 students. This writer measured students' level of success by their performance on main idea, inference, and vocabulary-in-context by comparing statistics collected from their Nelson-Denny and Departmental Exam pre-tests and post-tests. In addition, this writer compared students' attitudes toward reading by their responses on a teacher-made "Self-Awareness Survey" given during the first and twelfth week of this project.

Table of Contents

Abstract..... ii

Authorship/Document Release.....iii

Project Verification..... iv

List of Tables

Table 1..... 38
Table 2..... 40

Chapters

I. Purpose.....1

II. Research and Solution Strategy.....11

III. Method.....29

IV. Results.....37

V. Recommendations.....42

Reference List.....45

Appendixes

Appendix A: Reading Surveys.....47

Appendix B: Guide for Understanding Main Ideas....52

Appendix C: Supporting Details Information Sheet..54

Appendix D: Levels of Importance Exercise.....56

Appendix E: Main Idea and Supporting Details Diagrams.....58

Appendix F: Main Idea and Author's Purpose Exercise.....62

TABLE OF CONTENTS CONTINUED

Appendix G: Main Idea and Topic Sentences Exercise.....65

Appendix H: Guide for Constructing Main Idea Statements.....68

Appendix I: Constructing Main Idea Exercise.....70

Appendix J: TIPS Pyramid.....75

Appendix K: Main Idea Mastery Test.....77

Appendix L: Understanding Inferences Information Sheet.....81

Appendix M: Understanding Inferences Exercise.....83

Appendix N: Logical Inferences Exercise.....85

Appendix O: Making Inferences Exercise.....88

Appendix P: Making Inferences Mastery Test.....90

Appendix Q: Context Clues Information Sheets.....94

Appendix R: Vocabulary Words.....97

Appendix S: Fill-in-The-Blank Exercise.....99

Appendix T: Vocabulary in Context Exercise.....101

Appendix U: Words In Context Exercise.....104

Appendix V: Vocabulary in Context Mastery Test...106

CHAPTER I

Purpose

The community college selected for this study has been deeply committed to serving all the people of the community for more than 30 years. It is located in a growing international city with a unique and rich mix of cultures. Therefore, it requires a unique educational system. Students who attend the college come from all over the world. Only 61% are U.S. citizens. The college is comprised of 57.0% Hispanic, 21.1% Black, 19.7% White, and 2.2% other. The mission of this community college is to provide access to its diverse population while at the same time maintaining high standards and a goal of excellence for all.

Approximately 145 Associate in Arts, Associate in Science, and certificate programs are offered at five major campuses and at several off-campus centers throughout the county. More than 5,300 continuing education (non-credit) classes are taught each year. Almost 140,000 degrees and certificates have been awarded in the college's 32 year history.

The particular campus where this study took place offers more occupational and technical programs than any other of its five campuses. Most of the county's police and fire safety personnel are trained here. Its funeral services, and commercial and graphic arts programs are recognized as the most comprehensive in the county. Recently, a program in film production technology was developed to support the growing film industry in the area.

This community college currently employs over 2,500 people on a full-time basis. Over half serve in classified and support staff roles. The next largest group is faculty who comprise 35% of the full-time employees. The administrative group is the smallest; 11% are classified as professionals, and 2% as executive-managerial.

Students who attend classes at this community college migrate from different areas in the county. However, many of them live near the institution. The area is comprised of mostly middle-class workers. The homes in the community are modest and well kept. In addition, many small and large businesses are located in the surrounding area.

Approximately 60% of the students enrolled at the institution lack basic skills in reading, writing, and

math. Ninety percent of the credit students say they are seeking a degree. The few remaining say they want to up-grade their job skills or take a few courses prior to transfer. Many of the students receive financial aid. The college distributes more than $45 million in financial aid to more than 41,000 students. About 70% of the aid is in the form of grants and scholarships; about 20% is in loans, and the balance is in college work/study. The above information is mentioned in this community college's most recent fact book.

This writer has a Bachelor's Degree in English and has been teaching college-prep reading part-time at this community college for four semesters. The college-prep reading classes meet for a total of three hours per week during the fall and winter semesters, and six hours per week during the spring and summer semesters. The semesters are 16 weeks long in the fall and winter and 12 weeks long in the spring and summer.

This writer is also an associate instructor who works in the college's Learning Skills Center and works closely with the department chairperson, and with college-prep reading and writing faculty in the areas of program management, student advisement and placement, curriculum, and instruction. Duties

performed in the Learning Skills Center include providing an educational environment and setting for college-prep reading and writing students, helping students reinforce skills taught in the classrooms through the use of skills books, handouts, and materials supplied by their instructors and by providing students with individualized instruction whenever possible. In addition, this writer participates in the hiring and training of peer tutors to work in the college's four reading and writing centers and in the writing classrooms.

As an open-door institution, this community college accepts all students, whatever their entering levels of basic skills. All first-time-in-college students, however, must take a test that assesses their entering skill level in three areas: reading, writing, and math. Students who do not meet the minimum passing score in a subject area must complete "preparatory" course work designed to give them the skills needed to succeed in regular college-level work. According to this college's fact book, in Fall 1992, only 24 percent of the first-time-in-college students arrived at this community college with a sufficient level of basic skills to start in regular college classes. A majority

(65%) needed college preparatory work in at least one area.

In order for students to be exempt from taking a college-prep reading course, they must score at least 72 on the Computerized Placement Test (CPT). This is an entrance exam given by the college to all first-time students. Students who score below the cut-off for reading are registered in the appropriate developmental course. Students who score below 44 on the computerized test (CPT) are placed in REA 0001, the first level of reading. Students who score 44-71 are placed in REA 0002, the second level of reading; and those who score 72-77 are required to take college level reading, REA 1105.

The reading program where this practicum took place has approximately 30 employees. This includes a chairperson, full-time reading instructors, part-time reading instructors, full-time paraprofessionals, and peer tutors. These employees have a commitment to students.

This study involved a selected class group of 28 college-prep students who were deficient in basic reading skills and were required to take college-prep reading. They were lacking in the skills needed to do effective work in their courses. These students were

typical of those who after beginning college often discover that college classes are very different from high school classes and that they require more work and responsibilities. In addition, students such as these often learn that the standards are higher in college and that they have to take more initiative in their learning than ever before. The ages for the students in this study ranged from 19 to 42. Their dreams were to earn a degree and find a higher paying job.

The problem was that the college entrance reading scores for the 28 students involved in this study were between 44-71 instead of 72 or above which would exempt them from taking college-prep reading. Therefore, these students were required to register in an REA 0002 college-prep reading course. Many of these students opted to take regular college courses before or concurrently with a college-prep course. However, statistics taken from an institutional research data sheet showed that students who took an introductory psychology course prior to taking REA 0002 did very poorly: of those who took psychology prior to REA 0002, only 41.1% received passing grades of "A," "B," or "C; and among the students who took a psychology class concurrently with REA 0002, only slightly more, 50%, received passing grades of "A," "B," or "C."

These statistics showed a need for students to take REA 0002 prior to taking a college level course, since the percentage who received passing scores after taking REA 0002 concurrently with a psychology class was higher than for those who took psychology before REA 0002. If students completed REA 0002 first, it seemed likely that they would do even better.

One reason for students' poor reading performance was because they seldom picked up a book to read. A second reason was because many attended school and worked at the same time and had little time to study. A third reason was because of many of the students' family responsibilities. Another reason for the discrepancy was due to the students' lack of motivation and confidence in their own abilities. Also, students in this target group rarely participated in class discussions and did poorly on quizzes and tests.

At the end of the semester, REA 0002 students involved in this practicum were given a Nelson-Denny pre-test and a Departmental Exam pre-test. The purpose of these tests was to measure students' level of competency in reading comprehension. The Nelson-Denny measures both vocabulary and comprehension skills, and the Departmental Exam measures basic comprehension

skills. The passing score on the Nelson-Denny is 10.5, and the passing score on the Departmental Exam is 62%.

Students in the target group for this study were given both of these tests at the beginning and end of the 12-week session, as well as a "Self-Awareness Survey," to gain insight into their reading habits and motivation. Students' average at the beginning of the semester on the Nelson-Denny was about 6.9 which was equivalent to their reading at the ninth month of the sixth grade. It was hoped that by the end of the semester, students in this target group would average at least 10.5 which would be equivalent to their reading at the fifth month of the tenth grade. In addition, as shown in departmental data, of the students who took the Nelson-Denny post-test, only 24.4% passed. The average score on the Nelson-Denny post-test was a mere 8.35. Also, of the reported students who took the Departmental Exam post-test, only 44.2% passed. The average score on the Departmental Exam post-test was 56.4%.

Based on recent research, this writer identified and selected specific strategies to reduce this discrepancy and helped underprepared students improve their reading comprehension skills. In addition, this writer shared these strategies with other teachers in

the reading program. The use of these strategies helped lessen the discrepancies between the passing scores and the average post-test score (8.35) on the Nelson-Denny and the average post-test score (56.4%) on the Departmental Exam.

The 28 targeted college-prep students faced an uphill battle to complete their college-preparatory requirements and to compete on an equal footing with other college students. Therefore, it was essential that they be taught specific comprehension strategies to help them overcome their reading deficiencies.

The purpose of this practicum was to design a program by selecting strategies that would help the targeted students improve their reading comprehension skills.

Over a period of 12 weeks, the students in the target group were expected to:

1. Improve their reading comprehension skills to a minimum of 62 percent correct on recognizing main ideas, making inferences, and defining vocabulary in context as measured on a Departmental Exam.
2. Increase their reading comprehension scores on the Nelson-Denny Test to a minimum score of 10.5.
3. Increase their attitudes toward reading to a minimum of 80 percent for the number of times they

check "often" as evidenced on a teacher-made Reading Self-Awareness Survey.

CHAPTER II

Research and Planned Solution Strategies

The major goal of a reader, no matter what material he or she may read, is comprehension. Even though an understanding of reading comprehension has been the target of many researchers, there seemed to be no clear-cut definition of what comprehension is; however, an effective level of comprehension could perhaps only be attained if students were provided with detailed instructions and practice in how to systematically organize what is read. Thus, it seemed that a good comprehension program would teach students what to look for when they read and how to find it.

Many students are unable to pass tests, participate in discussions or write reports because of their inability to comprehend what they read. Therefore, it was necessary to employ strategies to help students better understand what they read.

Research done in the last ten years suggested that there were many strategies that could be used to help students improve their reading comprehension skills.

It was the aim of this writer to identify strategies from research that would help the targeted college-prep reading students improve their reading comprehension to a level that would qualify them for enrollment in regular college classes.

Research

In a recent study, Johnson (1984) investigated comprehension strategies designed to help readers determine main ideas and found that expert readers used prediction, assigning importance, and determining author's purpose as they constructed main idea statements.

Kieras (1986) also found that students' understanding of the main idea can usually be accomplished through their use of similar comprehension strategies. Kieras further stated that competent readers effectively use the comprehension strategies mentioned to help them master main idea tasks. However, he felt that poor and developing readers may not incorporate those strategies to help them understand the main ideas themselves.

Kieras (1986) also mentioned that the use of prediction, importance of assignment, and determining author's purpose may help readers mediate what are

often very challenging main idea tasks. Kieras strongly believed that it was important for readers to monitor main idea statements and strategies themselves because of the constraints of short term memory. Kieras (1986,p.13) reported, "With challenging comprehension tasks, the readers' use of non-automatic strategies may tax working memory to the point where comprehension breaks down." He felt that as the reader effectively managed the allocation of memory resources by monitoring main idea statements and related strategies, the accuracy and fluency of main idea comprehension would possibly be encouraged.

Afflerbach (1986) identified strategies for constructing main idea statements that include draft and revision, topic/comment, initial hypothesis, and listing, as well as automatic construction. In the draft and revision strategy, Afflerbach said that when the main idea stated by the reader was judged to be unsatisfactory, the reader considered it a first draft and set about revising it. In addition, he said that in the topic/comment strategy, if the reader was able to state the topic after reading the text, the reader did so, and then proceeded to explain why the topic was chosen. According to Afflerbach:

> In the initial hypothesis strategy, if the reader feels a reasonably accurate initial hypothesis of the main idea can be generated, based on the title's first sentence, or a skim of the text, the reader does so, and then proceeds through the text, monitoring the accuracy of the hypothesis, and modifying it when appropriate (Afflerbach, 1986, p.34).

Furthermore, in the listing strategy, Afflerbach (1986) said that readers actively searched for meaningful words, concepts, or ideas, from their text or from their prior knowledge when attempting to construct main ideas. However, he also stated that unlike the other strategies, the automatic construction strategy did not involve applying any particular rule.

The results of the study conducted by Afflerbach (1986) suggested that expert readers applied comprehension strategies to construct main idea statements rather than constructing them automatically. The effectiveness of the strategies were dependent upon the difficulty of the text read.

In addition, Afflerbach (1986) mentioned that constructing main ideas from text is an important but often difficult task when the main idea is not stated explicitly. It was his belief that the construction of the main idea is crucial to students' comprehension of text. Therefore, according to Afflerbach, students must learn to construct statements to represent the

main idea. Afflerbach suggested that many studies have indicated that a lot of readers lack main idea construction strategies.

Brown and Day (1990) described main idea construction as an elemental, automated process; however, Afflerbach (1986) suggested that main idea construction may be achieved through the use of one or more cognitive strategies instead of automatically.

Afflerbach (1986) also mentioned that expert readers reported using strategies to construct the main idea of texts designed to make the task particularly difficult, so that readers would be less likely to identify the main idea automatically.

In a study done by Hennings (1991), strategies that can be used to help students read independently and thus improve their reading skills are surveying, brainstorming and webbing activities. Based on this research, Hennings suggested that teachers should ask students to preview a selection to be read by briefly studying the title, author, introductory paragraph, major headings, illustrations, and concluding paragraph. Afterwards, students should predict the topic of the selection by brainstorming and by writing down the words they think of in a web in order to show

their relationships. Hennings called this strategy "targeting a point."

Additionally, Hennings (1991) defined "essential reading" as a comprehension strategy in which readers survey a text before reading to "target the point" in order to predict the main idea of a selection. Also, Hennings stated:

> In reading, they track the point and modify their predictions as they encounter details of the selection. After reading, they think about the point and relate it to what they know, and evolve the ultimate idea (Hennings, 1991, p.348).

In Henning's research, this strategy was referred to as "tracking a point."

Payne and Manning (1992) mentioned the act of metacognition as also being very important in helping students improve their reading comprehension. They felt that students should be taught how to use metacognitive reading strategies and techniques during reading instruction. Peterson (1992) also believed that metacognitive strategies were necessary for students' understanding of what they read. He stated that metacognition meant having control over one's thinking and felt that when applied to reading, it should be called "metacomprehension." Additionally, Payne and Manning asserted:

> Metacomprehension includes activities such as clarifying the purposes of reading, focusing attention on major content rather than trivia, monitoring ongoing activities to determine whether comprehension is occurring, engaging in reviews and self-questioning, and taking corrective action when failures in comprehension are detected (Payne and Manning, 1992, p.29).

Payne and Manning (1992) mentioned that using the above skills would definitely require the full participation of students. In addition, they felt that teachers would have to take a directive role in explaining the reading process to students and provide them with guided practice so that they would develop effective metacognitive skills. Based on their research, they felt that the major focus for metacognitive instruction was to teach students how to "think about thinking" (Payne and Manning, 1992, p.37).

Being able to read words is not adequate enough for one to engage in serious study. Therefore, students have to be taught to read between the lines. According to Crawley and Johnson (1988), students should be taught to identify what the authors mean as well as what is said on the surface. Johnson (1986) recommended a three-step strategy for teaching students inferential comprehension. He called this strategy "teach, practice and apply (TPA)." When using the "teach" strategy, paragraphs were presented to

students which required them to make an inference. Then, they had to identify the words that helped them make the correct inference. Additionally, while using the "practice" strategy, students were told to read and analyze short passages which required them to make logical inferences. Finally, when the "apply" strategy was used, students were shown one sentence at a time from a passage. Afterwards, they had to make inferences from the sentences. Subsequently, they were required to either confirm, reject, or modify their original inference.

According to Anderson and Pearson (1984), one of the most common findings of recent reading research is that drawing inferences and conclusions are essential parts of the comprehension process, even among young children. They describe inferencing as being at the heart of the comprehension process. Anderson and Pearson report:

> As they construct their own models of meaning for a given text, readers and listeners alike use inferencing extensively to fill in details omitted in text and to elaborate what they read (Anderson and Pearson, 1984, p.292).

Another strategy, "teacher modeling," was introduced by Norton (1992) to help students learn to draw inferences, and to think about what they read. Her belief was that through teacher modeling, students

generate and ask questions about what they read, and go beyond the information in the text by using clues from the text to understand characters' feelings, actions, beliefs or values. Norton's procedure for teacher modeling includes identifying a skill and analyzing the requirements needed for gaining meaning, identifying a text and selecting portions of the text from which characterization can be inferred, explaining or reviewing the specific element that will be modeled and introduced in the text, and modeling the whole sequence by reading from the text, stopping at an appropriate place, asking a question requiring an inference and exploring students' reasoning process. According to Early and Erickson (1992), teachers often neglect modeling and explaining what students should do during a comprehension lesson.

Because college classes often call for an extended vocabulary, students need a large reading vocabulary in order to unlock the meaning of texts and lectures. For this reason, Durkin (1986) believed that the use of context clues is very important for vocabulary development. In fact, her belief was that understanding vocabulary in context may be responsible for most of students' vocabulary learning. According to Durkin, students increase their vocabularies by some

20,000 words from grades three to seven. In addition, asserted Durkin, context clues and morphonological analysis are plausible explanations for students' increase in word knowledge.

There appears to be general agreement among Crawley and Johnson (1988) and Durkin (1986) that teaching students to use context clues is important; however, some traditional approaches to this instruction don't always work. To illustrate, Durkin found it difficult to ascertain whether some sentences can be understood by asking for clues, such as mood clues, experience clues, or summary clues.

Recognizing these limitations of the traditional context clue classifications, Steinberg, Powell and Kaye (1986) proposed that context clues are either internal or external. They defined internal clues as morphological elements of a work, such as affixes and roots, and defined external clues as syntactic and semantic elements within and among sentences.

Furthermore, Steinberg, Powell and Kaye (1986) mentioned that students should be taught how to use context clues with the materials they commonly use in their classroom. Steinberg, Powell and Kay (1986, p.62) stated, "Often, materials designed for context clue instruction do not reflect the textual style or

content encountered in daily reading tasks." They felt that too often these materials would present vocabulary in contrived contexts. Based on their study, when students used vocabulary strategies with their classroom textbooks, they were more likely to transfer the strategy to their independent learning.

Durkin (1986) also urged instructors to continuously reinforce the vocabulary-in-text strategy by reiterating previous strategies or skills. This reinforcement, she insisted, would be especially necessary for students encountering more difficult reading.

Durkin (1986) mentioned three stages for teaching students contextual clues. The first stage acquaints students with the concept of context. Here, the teacher displays a sentence containing a word not known by most students. After reading the sentence aloud, the teacher underlines the new word. Next, the teacher presents a picture that provides a clue to the word's meaning. For example, to teach the word "harvesting," the teacher could display a picture of a harvest activity and say, "This picture shows people harvesting wheat" (Durkin, 1986, p.63). Students are then directed to analyze the picture in light of the sentence and to list some of the actions being

performed by the people in the picture. The teacher writes the list on the chalkboard, then returns the picture and points out the picture clues. According to Durkin, once students have demonstrated an acceptable level of performance with this task, they can proceed to the next stage of context clue instruction.

In the second stage, students are required to read sentences with context clues of varying degrees of directness. To begin, the teacher presents sentences containing a word's definition. Durkin (1986, p.63) used the following example: "The plants in the forest were growing closely together; this density began to kill the smaller plants." In this example, the teacher reads the sentence aloud, identifies the vocabulary word "density," and defines the vocabulary word "density." Then, the students try to locate clues in the sentence which would aid in deriving a meaning for the word. In the second phase of the sentence-context stage, teachers present new vocabulary in sentences which display fewer direct context clues. In the final step of the sentence-context stage, the teacher provides multiple sentences, each containing a clue to a word's meaning. The word itself appears in only one of the sentences. At this point, said Durkin, students begin to learn that context clues are often derived

from syntactic and semantic clues outside the sentence which give hints concerning the unknown word.

In the third stage of the external context clue method, students analyze the whole paragraph. To begin, teachers have students focus on key phrases within a paragraph that provide clues to the meaning of the identified vocabulary item. Durkin (1986, p. 64) stated, "Eventually, students would realize that context clues often occur in paragraphs which precede or follow a given word."

Moreover, according to Roe (1992), students can drastically improve their vocabulary in context by reading trade books in individual or small group reading conferences. Nevertheless, she mentioned that classroom teachers who are involved in trade-book-based reading face time constraints, and found that students require more of teachers' time.

Furthermore, Roe (1992) added that during trade-book reading, students encounter words they can pronounce but do not know the definition of. Therefore, a whole class lesson on using context clues to infer meanings becomes necessary. Roe (1992, p.192) noted, "The benefits of this strategy are generally accepted and the contribution of this strategy to students' understanding of their books can make its use

instructionally appropriate."

However, Roe (1992) also mentioned that the dilemma switches from what to teach to how to teach it. Roe (1992, p.193) stated, "To best match the context of the readers, their books should become their instructional tools."

Finally, Roe (1992) cited two methods as essential for helping students improve their vocabulary skills when reading trade books: Students can be taught to use context clues and inference skills in order to identify word meaning, and they can be taught to insert their inference about a word's meaning into the text in place of the unknown word to make sure that the inferred meaning makes sense.

Also, Phelps and Pottorff (1992) believed that the use of newspapers in the classroom with secondary remedial reading students is a supplementary strategy that is worthy of attention for helping students improve their vocabulary-in-context skills. In their opinion, the use of newspapers in the classroom for instructional purposes has been well received by secondary students with reading problems; however, Phelps and Pottorff noted that few schools have a systematic, consistent reading program.
Moreover, they felt that newspapers provide a variety

of fresh material with which few book publishers can compete. Furthermore, they noted:

> Even a discouraged reader may find an item of interest which may be in the form of a classified advertisement, advice column, sports event, weather report, horoscope, movie review, fashion/beauty announcement, sensational occurrence, article involving teens, or news of local celebrities. Generally, at least one of the topics will interest most students (Phelps and Pottorff, 1992, p.42).

Phelps and Pottorff (1992) reported that using a newspaper not only helps students understand vocabulary in context, but it can also enhance their overall comprehension skills. According to these researchers, reading the newspaper can help students by increasing their vocabulary, increasing their creative writing opportunities, and increasing their general knowledge.

Planned Solution Strategies

This writer used the "Surveying, Brainstorming, and Webbing" strategies described by Hennings (1991) to help students learn to use graphic organizers for increasing their understanding of main idea tasks. Because students often confused the topic with the main idea, the use of these strategies enabled students to distinguish between the topic, topic sentence and supporting details.

The most useful skill students needed to develop that would improve both their reading comprehension and their performance on tests in class and on standardized tests was recognizing main ideas. Therefore, this writer used the "Prediction, Assigning Importance and Determining Author's Purpose" strategies described by Johnson (1986) to help increase students' understanding of main ideas. In performing these strategies, students completed exercises that not only required their understanding of the main idea, but their understanding of the author's purpose as well.

Sometimes paragraphs do not state exactly what the topic is. Instead, readers must decide on the main idea themselves. In order to do that, they must add up all the details the writer gives and then state the main idea in their own words. To teach this skill, the writer used the "Constructing Main Ideas from Text" strategy described by Afflerbach (1986) to help the 28 targeted students imply meaning based on the information given. In order for them to understand implied main ideas, they had to "read between the lines."

In addition, it was the decision of this writer to use the "Practice" strategy and the "Apply" strategy described by Johnson (1986) to help students improve

their inferencing skills. In making inferences, students must go beyond surface details and "read between the lines" to reach information logically. Because information is not always stated in exact terms, students must supply their own information from details or ideas that are suggested by the writer. By using the "Practice" and "Apply" strategies, students were able to draw logical inferences, and conclusions, and determine the meaning in a phrase, sentence or idea when all the information is not clearly stated.

Furthermore, this writer used the "Vocabulary-in-Text" strategy described by Durkin (1986) to help the targeted students predict word meanings through contextual clues. Students' success in college and in certain jobs depends heavily on their knowledge of words. An excellent way for students to predict a word's meaning is to think about the word in relation to nearby words. In other words, they should figure out the meaning of a word based on clues in the surrounding context. The above strategy helped the targeted students determine meanings from context.

Thus, many strategies have been found to be effective in helping students improve their overall reading comprehension skills. Even though there is no conclusive evidence that these strategies enable every

student to become a completely efficient reader, if the students selected for this study have been able to improve their reading comprehension, the selection of these strategies was definitely worthwhile. As a result, the students should have at least increased their thinking repertoires and become better able to meet new challenges successfully.

CHAPTER III

Method

For the purpose of this study, this writer met with the targeted college-prep class group for three hours one night a week from 7:00-9:45 p.m. It was the decision of this writer to use appropriate materials to help the 28 targeted students improve their reading comprehension skills. Unlike the traditional textbook/teacher strategies that were currently being used in this institution's reading program, this writer selected instructional strategies meant to encourage students to relate their experiences to their reading, consider what they already knew about what they read, discuss their reading through group-interaction, involve questions that involved thinking rather than recall, pose problems and encourage different interpretations, and integrate reading strategies by using a variety of teacher-made tests and teacher-made graphic organizers.

Weekly Timeline for Implementation

Week One:

The 28 targeted students were given a "Reading Self-Awareness Survey" as a pre-test. Then they were given a "Reading Interest Inventory Survey" to complete at home and return the next week. These two surveys (Appendix A, p.47) gave this writer some insight into students' reading habits and motivation. Afterwards, students were given a Nelson-Denny pre-test and a Departmental Exam pre-test to verify their prior knowledge in reading comprehension.

Week Two:

To introduce main ideas, the concept of main idea was defined. The writer gave each student a teacher-made guide for understanding main ideas (Appendix B, p.52), and a supporting details information sheet (Appendix C, p.54). A discussion followed. Students demonstrated their understanding of the subject matter by answering verbal questions elicited by the writer. Using the "Assigning Importance" strategy, students worked in groups on levels-of importance exercises (Appendix D, p.56). The writer monitored group activities.

Week Three:

Using the "Surveying, Brainstorming, and Webbing" strategy, students used passages from texts to diagram topics, main ideas, and supporting details on teacher-made pyramid diagrams, teacher-made umbrella diagrams and on published arch diagrams. The writer modeled this activity by explaining illustrations of these designs (Appendix E, p.58). This was a group assignment; each group was given different passages to read. After completing the assignment, a student from each group was asked to share and explain their design. The writer critiqued responses.

Week Four:

Performing the "Prediction, Assigning Importance, and Determining Author's Purpose" strategies, students completed main idea and author's purpose exercises (Appendix F, p.62). The most common reasons an author writes--to persuade, to inform, and to entertain--was explained by the writer beforehand. Students also did main ideas and topic sentences exercises (Appendix G, p.65).

Week Five:

Applying the "Constructing Main Ideas from Text" strategy, students created rather than located main ideas. Each student was given a constructing main idea

statements guide (Appendix H, p.68). The guide was discussed and questions were asked to verify students' understanding. The writer modeled this activity by illustrating and analyzing passages from text. Students did constructing main idea exercises (Appendix I, p.70). To demonstrate their knowledge of main ideas, students filled in a published "TIPS Pyramid," topic, main idea, points and summary assignment (Appendix J, p.75) and completed a published main ideas mastery test (Appendix K, p.77).

Week 6:

To introduce inferences, each student was given an understanding inferences information sheet (Appendix L, p.81. A discussion followed. The writer illustrated making inferences by writing passages on the chalkboard and having students make reasonable inferences. Next, using the "Teach" strategy, students demonstrated their knowledge of inferences by completing understanding inferences exercises (Appendix M, p. 83). The "Teach" strategy required students to identify the words in passages that helped them make inferences.

Week 7:

Using the "Practice" strategy, students completed logical inferences exercises (Appendix N, p.85) after reading short passages. They made their own inferences

from the passages by reading beyond the words and filling in details and information based on the writer's suggestions. A discussion followed.

Week 8:

Using the "Apply" strategy, students completed making inferences exercises (Appendix O, p.88) by reading sentences and making inferences. Then they applied their knowledge of inferencing to confirm, reject or modify their original inference. To assess students' knowledge of inferences, students were given a published making inference mastery test (Appendix P, p.90).

Week 9:

The writer introduced vocabulary in context by giving students two context clues information sheets (Appendix Q, p.94). The writer then modeled the information by discussing words in context, constructing context clues sentences, and by analyzing the sentences constructed. Students' comprehension of the subject matter was assessed through questioning. To begin a lesson on context clues, students were given ten vocabulary words to look up in the dictionary (Appendix R, p.97). Then students were given a teacher-made fill-in-the-blank exercise (Appendix S, p.99) to complete by using the words they looked up in

the dictionary. After completing the exercise, volunteers read their answers aloud and a discussion followed. Teacher modeling and appropriate feedback was executed. The purpose of this activity was to get students excited about learning vocabulary in context.

Week 10:

Using the "Vocabulary-in-Text" strategy, students were given vocabulary in context exercises (Appendix T, p.101) that required them to determine the meanings of underlined words in sentences. They had to write the definitions, circle the words that served as clues to the meanings, and state the types of context clues. The writer, along with the students, discussed and analyzed the answers.

Week 11:

Using the "Vocabulary-in-Text" strategy, students were given words in context exercises (Appendix U, p.104) that required them to derive meanings for the underlined words and write their meanings on their own paper. This was a group activity. Groups presented, compared, and contrasted their answers. The writer gave appropriate feedback. A published vocabulary in context mastery test (Appendix V, p.106) was given.

Week 12:

This was the final week of implementation. The target group was given a Nelson-Denny and Departmental Exam post-test to determine their comprehension growth. Students post-test scores were compared to their pre-test scores. In addition, students filled in the same "Reading Self-Awareness Survey" given the first week of implementation. This information showed the percentage of times each student responded "often," as compared to the percentage of times they responded to the same information during the first week.

Process for Monitoring Progress

This writer monitored students' progress by checking and scoring their work, giving them feedback on correct and incorrect answers, providing them with individualized attention, asking teacher-initiated questions and observing them during seat work. Scores on exercises and tests were recorded in a grade book.

Evaluation Schedule

During the twelve weeks of implementation, the progress of students in this target group was evaluated on a weekly basis through their performance on teacher-made tests, homework assignments, and group activities.

As pre-tests, a Nelson-Denny test, a Departmental Exam and a teacher-made "Self-Awareness Survey" were given the first week. Students completed the "Self-Awareness Survey" at home. Additionally, three commercially published mastery tests were given. A main ideas mastery test was given week five, a making inferences mastery test was given week eight, and a vocabulary in context mastery test was given week eleven. Finally, as post-tests, a teacher-made "Reading Self-Awareness Survey," a Departmental Exam, and a Nelson-Denny test were given during week twelve.

CHAPTER IV

Results

Objective 1: Improvement in Comprehension Skills on the Departmental Exam

One of the objectives of this practicum was to improve students' reading comprehension skills to a minimum of 62 percent correct on recognizing main ideas, making inferences, and defining vocabulary in context as measured on a Departmental Exam. On the Departmental Exam pre-test, only four students scored above the desired 62 percent. Many of the remaining 24 students scored well below 62 percent which was the score needed to pass the Departmental Exam. The results of the Departmental Exam post-test showed that 24 of the 28 students in the target group scored at least 62 percent or above. These students showed significant improvement in their comprehension skills on the Departmental Exam post-test after using selected comprehension strategies. The table below shows a comparison of students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Departmental Exam.

equivalent to their reading at the tenth grade and fifth month. The table below shows a comparison of students' pre-test and post-test scores on the Nelson-Denny Test.

Table 2

A Comparison of College Prep Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores on the Nelson-Denny Test

Students	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
1	10.4	13.4
2	8.9	13.4
3	9.0	13.4
4	7.9	12.4
5	9.3	11.1
6	9.1	10.5
7	7.9	10.3
8	8.9	10.1
9	9.3	10.1
10	9.1	9.9
11	4.1	9.6
12	5.3	9.6
13	7.5	9.6
14	7.7	9.6
15	5.6	9.4
16	4.5	9.4
17	6.4	9.3
18	8.5	9.3
19	6.8	9.1
20	5.3	8.9
21	4.3	8.7
22	6.1	8.7
23	7.9	8.5
24	4.1	8.3
25	5.8	8.3
26	4.1	7.5
27	6.9	7.5
28	4.1	7.3

Of the 28 students in the target group, only six scored 10.5 or above on the post-test. The average pre-test score for the 28 students in the target group was 7.0. which is equivalent to the seventh grade. The average post-test scores for the same 28 students was 9.8. Even though there was a 2.8 average increase in the 28 students' comprehension skills on the Nelson-Denny Test, the results were not significant. This could be due to the Nelson-Denny Test being a timed test.

Objective 3: Increase in Students' Attitudes Toward Reading

The last objective of this practicum was to increase students' attitudes toward reading to a minimum of 80 percent for the number of times they checked "often" on a teacher-made Reading Self-Awareness Survey.

Of the 28 students involved in this study, four students checked "often" at least 80 percent of the time at the beginning of the 12 week period, and 22 checked "often" at least 80 percent of the time at the end of the 12 week period. A comparison of the students' responses is shown in the table below.

Table 1

A Comparison of College Prep Students' Pre-test and Post-test Scores on the Departmental Exam

Students	Pre-test Scores	Post-test Scores
1	72 Percent	86 Percent
2	56 Percent	84 Percent
3	64 Percent	82 Percent
4	64 Percent	80 Percent
5	62 Percent	80 Percent
6	60 Percent	80 Percent
7	40 Percent	80 Percent
8	74 Percent	76 Percent
9	60 Percent	76 Percent
10	56 Percent	74 Percent
11	60 Percent	72 Percent
12	54 Percent	70 Percent
13	56 Percent	68 Percent
14	50 Percent	64 Percent
15	48 Percent	64 Percent
16	38 Percent	64 Percent
17	56 Percent	62 Percent
18	54 Percent	62 Percent
19	52 Percent	62 Percent
20	52 Percent	62 Percent
21	50 Percent	62 Percent
22	50 Percent	62 Percent
23	34 Percent	62 Percent
24	50 Percent	60 Percent
25	50 Percent	52 Percent
26	46 Percent	52 Percent
27	62 Percent	42 Percent
28	36 Percent	38 Percent

Objective 2: Increase in Comprehension Scores on the Nelson-Denny Test

Another objective of the practicum was to increase students' reading comprehension scores on the Nelson-Denny Test to a minimum score of 10.5 which is

Table 3

A Comparison of the Percentage of Times College Prep Students Checked "Often" on a Teacher-Made Reading Self-Awareness Survey

Percent of Times Checked "Often" Pre		Percent of Times Checked "Often" Post	
1 Student	10 Percent	1 Student	60 Percent
2 Students	20 Percent	5 Students	70 Percent
5 Students	40 Percent	10 Students	80 Percent
8 Students	60 Percent	10 Students	90 Percent
8 Students	70 Percent	2 Students	100 Percent
4 Students	80 Percent		

The average percentage of times students checked "often" at the beginning of the study was 47 percent; the average percentage of times students checked "often" by the end of the study was 80 percent. Overall, there was a 33 percent average increase in the number of times students in this target group checked "often" on the teacher-made Reading Self-Awareness Survey by the end of the twelve week period of implementation.

CHAPTER V

RECOMMENDATIONS

The strategies used in this practicum could give teachers additional methods through which to teach reading comprehension. It is important that teachers use a variety of strategies when helping students improve their reading skills.

This writer found that when students used the "Assigning Importance" strategy, they were able to make connections between seemingly unrelated words, make predictions, assign importance, and determine the author's purpose as they constructed main idea statements. When students in the target group used the "Surveying, Brainstorming, and Webbing" strategy, they were able to recognize and evaluate the parts of a paragraph.

The "Constructing Main Ideas from Text" strategy allowed students to create rather than locate main ideas. This strategy was effective in helping students improve their critical thinking skills.

The "Teach strategy required students to identify words in passages that helped them make inferences. As a result, their inferencing skills were vastly improved on mastery tests.

The "Practice" strategy was essential for reinforcing students' learning. This strategy required students to do repetitive exercises until they acquired a better understanding of the subject matter.

When using the "Apply" strategy, students were able to apply new information to information they had already learned. When making inferences, they were able to confirm, reject or modify their original inference.

In using the "Vocabulary-in-Text" strategy, students learned that context clues were often derived from syntactic and semantic clues outside the sentences which gave hints concerning the unknown words. After doing repeated exercises in vocabulary-in-context, students showed improvement on vocabulary-in-context mastery tests.

Based on this writers' findings, it is recommended that the a above strategies be implemented in the reading program at the community college selected for this study.

Additionally, during the implementation of this project, a "Reading Self-Awareness Survey" was given as a pre-test and post-test to give some insight into students' reading habits and motivation. This writer found this to be most effective and recommends the continued use of these surveys in the future.

Also, the targeted students were given Nelson-Denny and Departmental Exam pre-tests at the beginning of this study to verify their prior knowledge in reading comprehension. At the end of the study, the students were given Nelson-Denny and Departmental Exam post-tests. Students performed much better on the Departmental Exam than on the Nelson-Denny Test because the Departmental Exam more closely matched the objectives for the course. Based on these findings, this writer recommends that the Departmental Exam continue to be a testing instrument in the department where this study took place, and that the Nelson-Denny Test be discontinued as a tool for measuring students' reading comprehension.

This writer will continue to implement these objectives when teaching reading classes. This writer also recommends that the department where this study took place implement similar objectives to help students improve their comprehension skills.

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APPENDIX A: READING SURVEYS

APPENDIX A

READING SELF-AWARENESS SURVEY

Check the following items in the appropriate blank: This is not a test, so please be truthful in assessing your reading awareness.

		OFTEN	SOMETIMES	RARELY
1.	I can read a paragraph and pick out the main idea.	_____	_____	_____
2.	I can decide what information supports the main topic of a paragraph.	_____	_____	_____
3.	When listening to a lecture, I can identify the main idea and the information that supports it.	_____	_____	_____
4.	I know how to take the kind of notes that allow me to separate main ideas from details.	_____	_____	_____
5.	In reviewing for a test, I am confident that I have all the necessary details and facts in my notes to support anticipated questions.	_____	_____	_____
6.	My courses include unfamiliar words and terms.	_____	_____	_____
7.	Tests in my classes assume I understand certain key terms.	_____	_____	_____

8.	I practice using new words in sentences.	____	____	____
9.	When I do not do well on a test item, it is because I do not know the vocabulary.	____	____	____
10.	I enjoy reading and read books other than my textbook.	____	____	____

READING INTEREST INVENTORY SURVEY

Directions: Please write yes or no on the line next to each question.

1. Have you ever had trouble understanding what you read? _____

2. do you enjoy reading for pleasure? _____

3. Do you have a library card? _____

4. Have you been to a library within the last the last month? _____

5. How many books have you borrowed from the library during the last three months? _____

6. Do you enjoy reading in bed? _____

7. Would you rather watch television than read? _____

8. Do you think that you are a good reader? _____

9. Do you read as rapidly as you would like to?

_____

10. Do you read aloud to younger children? _____

11. Do you have books and magazines in your home for you to read? _____

12. Do you read the newspaper regularly? _____

13. Of the following kinds of books, which ones do you like to read for pleasure? Place a check by your choice(s).

adult novels _____ science fiction _____
sport stories _____
adventure stories _____
historical novels _____
mystery stories _____

APPENDIX B: GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING MAIN IDEAS

APPENDIX B

GUIDE FOR UNDERSTANDING MAIN IDEAS

1. Getting the main idea is the most important skill in reading.
2. To find the topic of a passage ask, "Who or what is the subject?"
3. To find the main idea of a passage ask, What is the point the author is trying to make?"
4. The main point of a passage should always be stated by the reader in a complete sentence.
5. All details are not of equal importance.
6. Major details are needed to explain or prove the main point.
7. Minor details are included to make the passage more interesting.
8. To get the main point of longer selections, break the material into subsections and determine how they support the whole.

APPENDIX C: SUPPORTING DETAILS INFORMATION SHEETS

APPENDIX C

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF DETAILS?

Details support, develop and explain a main idea. Specific details can include:

1. Reasons
2. Incidents
3. Facts
4. Examples
5. Steps
6. Definitions
7. Comparisons
8. Contrasts
9. Repetitions
10. Descriptions

KEY WORDS FOR DETERMINING MAJOR AND MINOR DETAILS

Key words for major details:

1. one
2. first
3. another
4. furthermore
5. also
6. finally

Key words for minor details:

1. for example
2. to be specific
3. that is
4. this means

APPENDIX D: LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE EXERCISE

APPENDIX D

RECOGNIZING LEVELS OF IMPORTANCE

The following shows how a list of scrambled, seemingly unrelated words - horses, grass, botany, zoology, cows, ants, bees, rabbits, entomology, branches of biology flowers, mosquitoes, trees - can be organized according to their levels of importance. Notice that in organizing the words the general topic is stated first, followed by sub-categories of details, which are further subdivided into specific examples. Either an outline or a map be used to organize the words into levels of importance.

BRANCHES OF BIOLOGY

Botany

- grass
- flowers
- trees

Zoology

- horses
- cows
- rabbits

Entomology

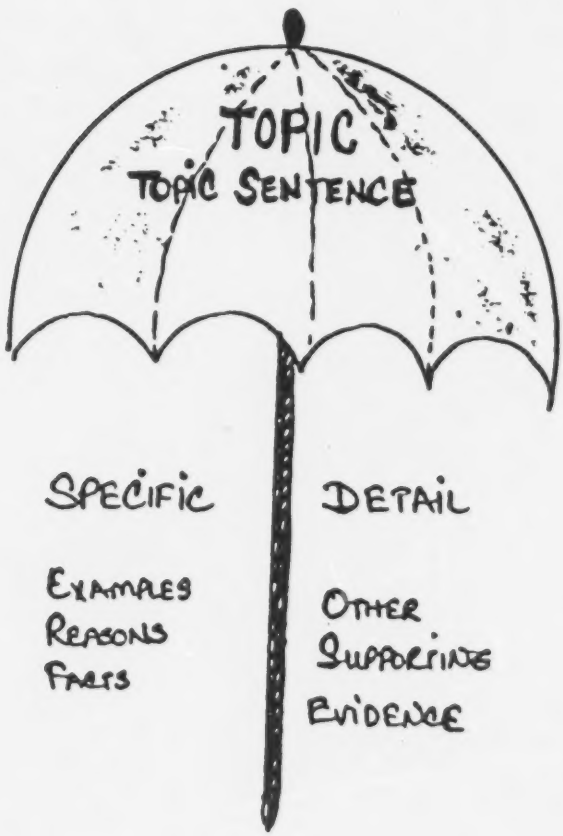
- ants
- bees
- mosquitoes

APPENDIX E: MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS DIAGRAMS

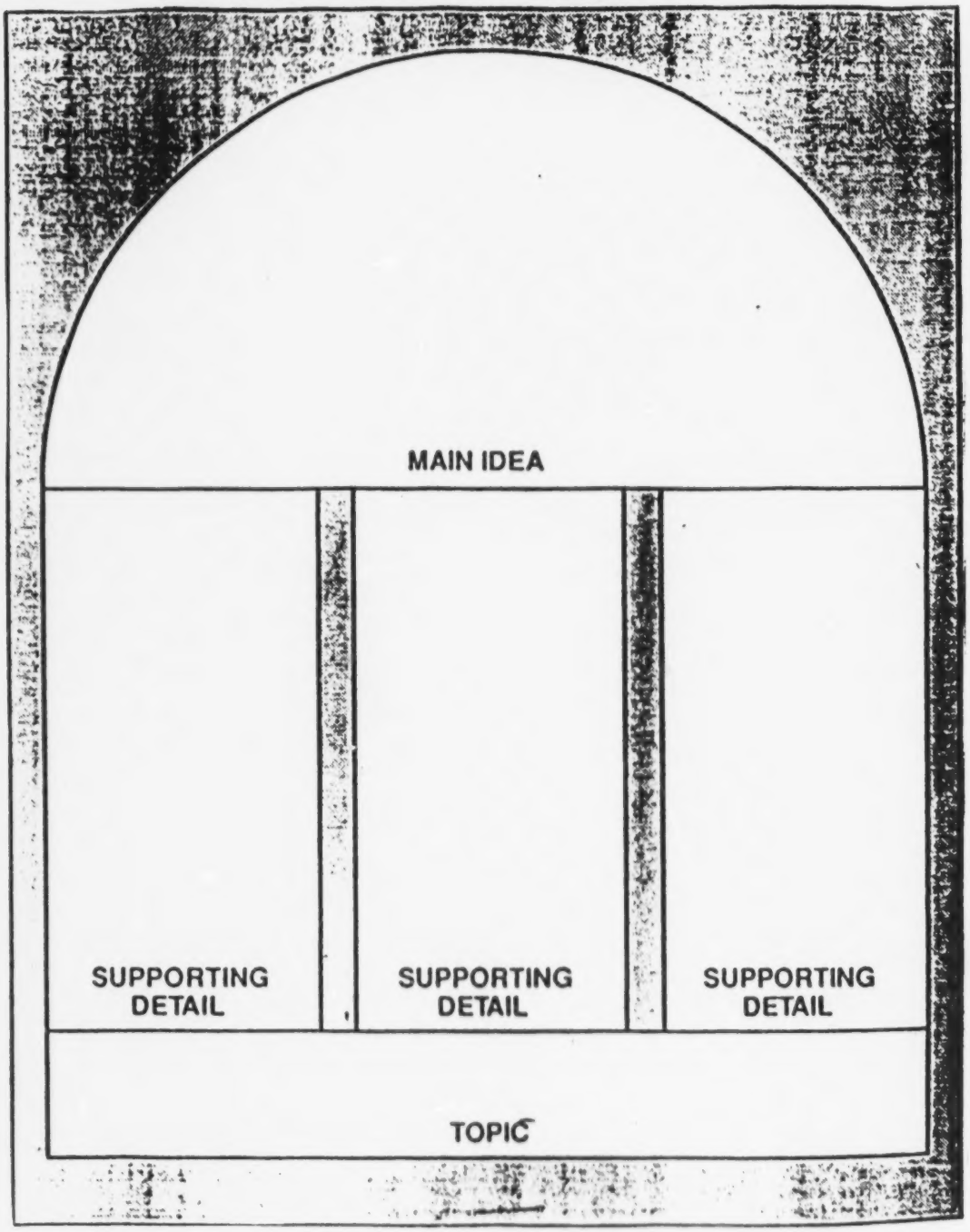
APPENDIX E

MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS DIAGRAMS

UMBRELLA DIAGRAM



ARCH DIAGRAM:
MAIN IDEA AND SUPPORTING DETAILS



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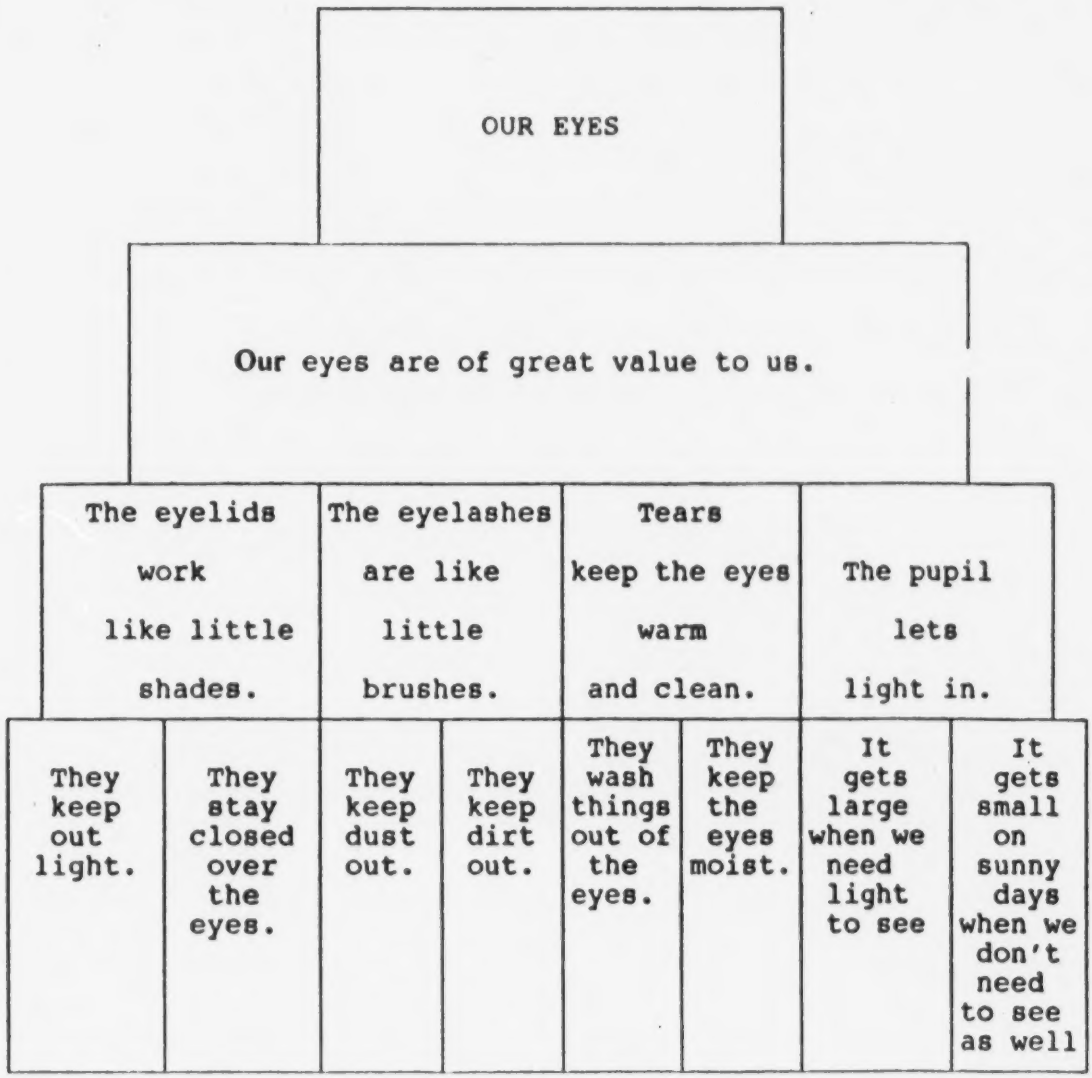
PYRAMID DIAGRAM

LOCATING THE TOPIC SENTENCE, MAIN IDEA, AND MAJOR AND MINOR DETAILS


OUR EYES
Our eyes are of great value to us.
The eyelids work like little shades.
The eyelashes are like little brushes.
Tears keep the eyes warm and clean.
The pupil lets light in.
They keep out light.
They stay closed over the eyes.
They keep dust out.
They keep dirt out.
They wash things out of the eyes.
They keep the eyes moist.
It gets large when we need light to see
It gets small on sunny days when we don't need to see as well

APPENDIX F: MAIN IDEA AND AUTHOR'S PURPOSE EXERCISE

APPENDIX F

MAIN IDEAS AND AUTHOR'S PURPOSES EXERCISE

The answer to question one will give you an idea of what the paragraph is about. It may be about a person, place, thing or event. Question two makes you look at the sentences to find out what the writer really wants you to know about that person, place, thing, or event. The answer to question two is the main idea of the paragraph. Check to see if the main idea is correct by using it as an umbrella statement. Then see if the sentences fit under that umbrella. Question three requires you to indicate the author's purpose for writing the paragraph.

Directions: Read the sample passages below and answer the questions that follow:

Passage 1

Toys can be very harmful to children. For instance, some metal toys may have sharp edges that can cause bad cuts, Or plastic toys may have small pieces that children can bite off and swallow. Also, the paint on some toys may have lead in it. These toys are not safe because children might put them in their mouths.

1. Who or what is this paragraph about?

   _____

2. What does the writer really want you to know about the topic?

   _____

3. What is the author's purpose?
   a. entertain
   b. persuade
   c. inform

Passage 2

Cabbage is high in vitamins A, B1, B2, and C. It is very low in calories, with only 24 calories per cup raw and 30 calories per cup when cooked. Cabbage can be used to make many tasty low calorie dishes. Thus, cabbage is a good food for people on diets.

4. Who or what is the paragraph about?

   _____

5. What does the writer really want you to know about cabbage?

_____

6. What is the author's purpose?
   a. entertain
   b. persuade
   c. inform

Passage 3

Avoid feeling helpless in electric power failures by knowing what to do. First, be prepared by keeping candles in the house. Second, have at least one flashlight with batteries that work. Third, turn off almost all lights and anything that uses electric power. Last keep one or two lights as they were when the electric power went out so you will be able to tell when it is back again.

7. Who or what is the paragraph about?

_____

8. What does the writer really want you to know about that "who" or "what?"

_____

9. What is the author's purpose?
   a. entertain
   b. persuade
   c. inform

Passage 4

John was very helpful around the house. He dusted and cleaned all the rooms. He usually washed and dried the dishes. John also made sure that the trash was put out into the alley.

10. Who or what is the paragraph about?

_____

11. What does the writer really want you to know about the topic?

_____

12. What is the author's purpose?
   a. entertain
   b. persuade
   c. inform

APPENDIX G: MAIN IDEA AND TOPIC SENTENCES EXERCISE

APPENDIX G

MAIN IDEAS AND TOPIC SENTENCES

Directions: Write the topic and the main idea on the lines provided.

1. I am always glad when the first day of school is over. It is so confusing to have to figure out where to go for my classes and who my teachers are. There's not much to do once I'm in class except to get my assignments and books. The good part is seeing my friends again.

   Topic _____

   Main Idea _____

2. Except in bad weather, the cyclist has some important advantages over the motorist. First of all, he gets a good dose of fresh air as he travels. Second, he gets plenty of exercise. Finally, he is not held up by traffic jams. He is able to get to work in better time and in better spirits.

   Topic _____

   Main Idea _____

3. I don't really believe it is possible to make sure I have good luck. I think it's silly to carry something like a rabbit's foot. Still, I know some people who believe totally in their strange good luck charms. My aunt wears a clove of garlic around her neck for good luck, day in and day out. Then there's Mike Smith, who tapes a 1964 penny to his left ankle before every football game he plays. He claims the penny has helped the team win many a close game.

   Topic _____

   Main Idea _____

4. Everyone in the school was asked to help with the project. The seventh graders washed all the windows, inside and out. The eighth graders painted the doors and the fence around the playground. The ninth grade students scrubbed marks off walls, trimmed the bushes, and planted flowers in front. Students, teachers, administrators, parents, and even the mayor praised the Student Council for organizing such a successful School Clean-Up Day.

   Topic _____

   Main Idea _____

5. At the beginning of our reading class, Ms. Jones couldn't find his glasses, and he insisted he couldn't teach without them. He checked and rechecked all of his pockets. Tammy looked through his desk and briefcase, and the rest of us searched all around the room. This took quite a long time because Mr. Jones has a lot of things all around the shelves and tables. The twins went to check the faculty room and the lunch room. Tammy came back from the lunch room with the glasses. They were slightly bent, but otherwise all right.

   Topic _____

   Main Idea _____

APPENDIX H: GUIDE FOR CONSTRUCTING MAIN IDEA STATEMENTS

APPENDIX H

GUIDE FOR CONSTRUCTING MAIN IDEA SENTENCES

1. Try to figure out what all the details in the paragraph are trying to show, not just a few of them.

2. Make a complete sentence that names a person or an object and tells what a person or an object is doing.

2. Do not look at just a few sentences in the paragraph in order to find out the main idea. Even though the first few sentences express the idea that giving breakfast to the family is dull, it would not be correct to say that the sentence "serving breakfast is a dull task " is the main idea of the paragraph. The sentence is true; we know that from statements in the paragraph. But the sentence is not the main idea; it is only one narrow idea that helps us build the main idea sentence: My life as a housewife is filled with dull meaningless tasks.

3. Do not offer a statement that is too general as the main idea. For example, it would be incorrect to say that the main idea of the paragraph is: 'The job of the American housewife is dull and meaningless." The author of the paragraph might agree with this statement, But no details in the paragraph suggest that the writer was talking about the American housewife in general. The author was talking about herself; she was showing that her job was dull and meaningless, so the main idea could be stated in these terms: "My life as a housewife is filled with dull, meaningless tasks."

APPENDIX I: CONSTRUCTING MAIN IDEA EXERCISE

APPENDIX I

CONSTRUCTING MAIN IDEAS EXERCISE

Read the following brief passages. Add up all the details in your mind in order to figure out the main idea that is implied. Then write a sentence that tells the main idea of each paragraph.

1. Brotherly love is the love among equals; motherly love is love for the helpless. Different as they are from each other, they have in common that they are by their nature not restricted to one person. If I love my brother, I love all my brothers; if I love my child, I love all my children; no, beyond that, I love all children all that are in need of my help. In contrast to both types of love is erotic love; it is the craving for complete fusion, for union with the other person. It is by its very nature exclusive and not universal; it is also perhaps the most deceptive form of love there is.

   - Erich Fromm

_____

_____

2. Some researchers have described what they called "a motivational syndrome" among young marijuana smokers, who, with frequent use of the drug, tend to lose interest in school, friends and sexual intercourse. However, it is not known whether marijuana use is a direct cause or merely one symptom of a general underlying problem.

Persistent brain abnormalities and changes in emotion and behavior have been demonstrated in monkeys given large doses of marijuana.

- James E. Brody

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3. Certain swimming aides, such as the inner-tube type, prevent the swimmer from learning to swim with his head submerged. such learning devices as tubes and other extremely large flotation aides that prevent a person from getting his head under water when he is wearing them cause the person to float in a very high position and should be avoided. Secondly, all aides are hazardous to the extent that they provide false security. The wearer may move into deep water and slip out of the support or it may become deflated due to a leaky valve or a hole being torn in it.

- James E. Counsilman

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4. Until the nineteenth century, more imposing buildings, universities, and cities were found in the Spanish colonies than anywhere else in America. Still, for all their wealth the Spanish colonies never became unified. This was partly due to the great distances, as well as the terrain, which

prevented people form being in close touch with one another. Moreover, owing to the wide gulf between the handful of rich people and the vast mass of people that the Spanish system created, Spanish-American society had built-in strains and conflicts. In addition, the sharp divisions that existed between the races interfered with the establishment of representative government.

- Henry Graff

---

5. In the struggle for the Equal Rights amendment, American feminists acted with extraordinary focus and unity. Moments like these are by their nature exceptional. We may not see one again for decades. But rather than mourning the end of such "golden eras" or trying desperately to recreate them in permanent forms, we need to recognize that they ought to be exceptional. unity has obvious benefits, but it also has enormous costs. In the four years since ERA ratification failed, we've seen both the passing of the "wartime" mentality which assumed that "loose lips sink ships" and a remarkable flowering of feminist thought and understanding.

- Jane Mansbridge

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6. Nancy Lieberman can't entirely decide how to handle being your basic walking (not to mention leaping) one-woman yuppie empire - a star, at 28, of basketball, television, publishing and business. sometimes she's all perkiness and positive thinking: "I can't think of anything I'd rather do than be me. I love it. "But beneath the Hallmark Card exterior, you sense that there lurks a hard-nosed, hard-knocks street kid with a streak of restlessness as wide as Jamaica Bay. "Yeah, it's a lot of work. But if I were sitting around with nothing to do, I'd jump out the window. I'm a workaholic. If there are no problems, no business, no contracts, no TV, I'm like, okay, I better work out 30 hours today." This under-the-skin Nancy is a woman who redefines the word "driven." In fact, in a contest she could probably wrest that adjective away from the winning car in the Indianapolis 500.

- Lindsy Van Gelder

The above passages were taken from Reading Skills Handbook, Houghton Mifflin Company, 1988.

APPENDIX J: TIPS PYRAMID

APPENDIX J

TIPS PYRAMID (TOPIC, IDEA, POINTS, AND SUMMARY)

For the TIPS pyramid below, write in "A Student Problem" as the topic. For the main idea, write a sentence explaining a situation that bothers you as a student, such as crowded classrooms, registration, or boring instructors. For the points, give examples of this problem. Then write a summary that includes all the previous TIPS elements.

TOPIC

_____

MAIN IDEA

_____

POINTS

1) _____

2) _____

3) _____

4) _____

SUMMARY

_____

_____

Roxbury Publishing Company

APPENDIX K: MAIN IDEA MASTERY TEST

APPENDIX K

TEN STEPS TO IMPROVING
COLLEGE READING SKILLS

NAME_____

MAIN IDEAS: MASTERY TEST 7

The following selections have main ideas that may appear at any place within the paragraph. Identify the topic sentence of each paragraph by filling in the correct sentence number in the space provided.

1. Small animals eat more in relation to their own size than large animals do. For instance, a field mouse eats as much as its own body weight every day. That is, a one-ounce mouse will eat one ounce of food a day, or 100 percent of its body weight. However, an elephant that may weigh 12,000 pounds will eat about 600 pounds of food a day. As astounding an amount of food as that is to eat, it is still only 5 percent (or 1/20th) of the elephant's body weight.

   Topic sentence: _____

2. Many people dream of being celebrities, but have you considered, for example, that celebrities have to look perfect all the time? There's always a photographer ready to take an unflattering picture of a famous person looking dumpy in old clothes. Celebrities also sacrifice their private lives. Their personal struggles, divorces, or family tragedies all end up as front-page news. Most frighteningly, celebrities are in constant danger of the wrong kind of attention. Threatening letters and even physical attacks from crazy fans are things the celebrity must contend with. Would-be celebrities might change their minds if they considered what famous people must go through.

   Topic sentence: _____

3. Frozen foods are commonly thought to be inferior to fresh or even canned versions. The fact is, however, that frozen foods can be superior in several ways. Because vitamins are destroyed by the passage of time, fresh or canned fruits and vegetables can lose much of their nutrients from farm to home. But foods that are frozen have their vitamins "locked in" at their just-picked peak, so there is very little, if any, vitamin loss. Also, prepared frozen dinners afford portion-control, something that home-cooked meals do not. Last, the nutrition-labeling on prepared frozen foods is often far more complete than that on canned ones--and fresh foods almost always lack any kind of labeling. This nutrition information can be extremely helpful to those watching their intake of cholesterol, sodium, calories and so forth.

   Topic sentence: _____

4. Because the achieving of adulthood is a significant time in a young person's life, many traditional cultures mark the event in some ceremonial way. In some cultures, the ceremony is primarily a religious one. Jewish 13-year-olds are welcomed into the adult community through a bar or bat mitzvah, in which they read from the Torah during a synagogue service. Other ceremonies emphasize the taking on of adult characteristics. When a Northern Shoshone Indian girl begins menstruating for the first time, she is isolated and kept very busy so that she will become an industrious woman. And some ceremonies involve a painful coming-of-age rite. A boy of the Andaman Islands is welcomed to manhood by having sixty or more cuts made in his back with a sharpened arrowhead.

   Topic sentence: _____

5. Does popcorn beat peanuts? Yes, says an Ontario manufacturing firm that has substituted air-popped popcorn for the standard Styrofoam "peanuts" packing material. The firm has found three ways in which popcorn is preferable to "peanuts" as package filler. First, popcorn is biodegradable, making it more environmentally friendly than Styrofoam "peanuts," which will live on in waste-disposal systems for vast lengths of time. Second, the cost of popcorn is roughly one-fourth that of foam peanuts.

   Topic sentence: _____

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APPENDIX L: UNDERSTANDING INFERENCES INFORMATION SHEET

APPENDIX L

UNDERSTANDING INFERENCES INFORMATION SHEET

What are inferences?

Sometimes words do not mean exactly what they seem to say. They often mean much more. You have to see what the actual words add up to in order to get the real meaning. For instance, suppose you read. "The big test had Gwen going around in circles." Would you think that Gwen was spinning around like a top? Of course not. You would know the author's real meaning. Gwen's mind was confused, as though it was going round and round.

Here's a harder one: "Amy tried not to show how she felt. But her lips shook and her eyes grew moist." What is the author's real meaning here? Is it only something about lips and eyes? No. The author is really describing Amy's inner feelings. She's a tense and unhappy girl.

You should have understood those two examples. But how did you understand them? Surely, you did not use the exact meaning of the words. Instead, you were going beyond the words. You were making inferences. A good inference is simply a good guess based on all the facts.

Authors often avoid saying exactly what they mean. They do this on purpose. They want their readers to use their minds. They want their readers to discover things for themselves. They know that this kind of reading is more fun. To get an author's total meaning, the reader has to make inferences.

APPENDIX M: UNDERSTANDING INFERENCES EXERCISE

APPENDIX M

UNDERSTANDING INFERENCES EXERCISE

Steve smiled and put his arm around Sadie's shoulder. Sadie thought to herself, "He likes me." Sadie's thought is an inference. Steve did not say he liked her. From his two actions Sadie has made this judgment. We make inferences all the time. As we observe the world around us or watch a movie or read a book, we pick up little bits of information that are like clues. We put the information together in our minds and come up with an explanation or a judgment. This is what an inference is.

Sometimes one clue is enough to make a good inference. Sometimes we need lots of clues to make a good inference.

Directions: Write at least one clue and one inference for the sentences listed below.

1) Jean saw smoke billowing out of the windows and doors of a house.

   Clue:_____

   Inference:_____

2) When John looked out the window, he saw puddles in the driveway.

   Clue:_____

   Inference:_____

3) When John looked out the window, he say puddles in the driveway. The trees were dripping in the breeze. Two people walked by with raincoats glistening wet.

   Clues:_____

   Inference:_____

APPENDIX N: LOGICAL INFERENCES EXERCISE

APPENDIX N

LOGICAL INFERENCES EXERCISE

Directions: After reading each problem below, answer the questions and explain your answers in the space provided.

PROBLEM 1

Amy is a file clerk. Her boss told her to file a letter yesterday, and she filed it. Today her boss told her she needed the letter again. But when Amy looked in the file, it wasn't where she had put it. Amy then asked the secretaries in the office if any of them had taken the letter from the file or seen it anywhere. None of them had. What is a reasonable inference for Amy to make? Explain your answer.

_____

_____

_____

PROBLEM 2

Mr. DeSanto, his wife, and three children went out to the local Chinese restaurant for dinner. They had never been to this restaurant before, but they enjoyed their dinner and they all had a good time.

Is it reasonable to infer that the DeSanto family liked Chinese food before they went to this restaurant? Explain.

_____

_____

_____

PROBLEM 3

Is it reasonable to infer that the DeSanto family liked the Chinese food they ate there? Explain.

APPENDIX O: MAKING INFERENCES EXERCISE

APPENDIX O

MAKING INFERENCES EXERCISE

Make inferences from the following statements by filling in the blanks.

1. We may infer from the emerald necklace and the mink coat she wore that the woman is probably _____.

2. We infer from the rattling and knocking noise the engine makes that the engine is_____.

3. We may infer from the paint spots on his old jeans and his hands that he has probably been_____.

4. We may infer from circling vultures that something below them on the ground is _____.

5. We may infer from the many whitecaps on the ocean that sailing would be

_____.

APPENDIX P: MAKING INFERENCES MASTERY TEST

APPENDIX P

TEN STEPS TO IMPROVING
COLLEGE READING SKILLS

NAME_____

INFERENCES: MASTERY TEST 7

A. Read each passage below. Then check the two statements after each passage which are most logically supported by the information given.

1-2. Many experts say that pink has a special charm. A California probation department that used to have trouble quieting violent juvenile offenders now puts them in bubble-gum-pink cells. Within a few minutes the offenders stop screaming and banging and often even fall asleep. Also, in a college experiment, a group of children were put in small enclosures of various colors. All of the pens became covered with graffiti except one that was painted pink.

_____a. Pink paint is resistant to graffiti.
_____b. Colors can affect people.
_____c. Most probation departments now use pink cells.
_____d. Pink seems to calm people down.
_____e. Pink is most children's favorite color.

3-4. How to succeed in business in a foreign country? A famous consultant for the UN advises "When in Rome, do as the Romans do." Carry lots of business cards in Japan, and make sure they're translated into Japanese, since they are considered an important picture of who you are in the company. Bow whenever you are bowed to, and rise only after your partner does. Don't do business on the fourth of the month, since the number four also means death in Japanese. It's okay to eat and leave promptly at business dinners in China, since short

speeches are given throughout the meal rather than a long one at the end. However, being prompt is rude in the Mideast, so you should arrive late and sit close enough to the other person to feel his breath so you will not appear unfriendly. Holding hands with your business associate is even better. But be careful not to show the soles of your feet while you are seated, as it is considered unclean and offensive to your host.

_____a. To succeed in business in a foreign country, one should probably learn about that country's culture.
_____b. It is probably rude to be prompt in Japan.
_____c. The UN consultant feels that it's best to do business in Rome.
_____d. The Japanese probably also prefer not to do business on the thirteenth of each month.
_____e. Some behavior we consider natural is really culturally based.

B. After reading the following passage, circle the letter of the best-supported answer to each question.

Every year about 1,000 people apply to Burger king for a franchise. Only a tenth are successful. In this rigorous competition, knowledge or even interest in food counts for little. The candidates could as well be prospective Midas Muffler dealers. What Burger King is mainly looking for is people who have management ability, enthusiasm, willingness to follow instructions to the letter, and $11,000 in liquid assets. Typically, Burger King provides the land and buildings. The franchisee finances signs, lights, broilers, computer-regulated French fry fryers, and other fittings. The franchisee's total outlay averages $179,000 a store.

Successful applicants spend a week working in an existing restaurant to see if they like the

business, then six weeks of basic training at a regional center, and finally nine days at Burger King University (BKU) in Miami. At BKU, they are tutored in everything from labor relations to the proper spacing of hamburger patties on a broiler--one quarter of an inch apart.

Franchisees are likely to earn a handsome return. A well-managed store with sales of $717,000 a year, the current average for Burger Kings, should provide the franchisee with a pretax income of $70,000. A franchisee who performs well with one store often gets to put up another nearby and then maybe a few more, until he or she bumps up against the 1-hour-driving limit that is one of Burger King's new restrictions on store operators. Franchisees can still dream, as long as their dreams are regular size, not Whoppers.

5. Becoming a Burger King franchisee would probably appeal most to

   a. a strongly independent person.
   b. a person with business experience.
   c. a graduate of a cooking school.

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APPENDIX Q: CONTEXT CLUES INFORMATION SHEETS

APPENDIX Q

CONTEXT CLUES INFORMATION SHEETS

BASIC TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

Example clues: Reveal the word's meaning. Introduced by signal words such as for example, for instance, including, and such as.

Synonym Clues: words that mean the same or almost the same as the unknown word. Introduced by signal words such as or and that is.

Antonym Clues: Words and phrases that mean the opposite of a word. Introduced by words and phrases such as however, but, yet, on the other hand, and in contrast.

General Sense of the Sentence or Passage: The new word's meaning can be found through the other ideas in a passage.

FIVE IMPORTANT TYPES OF CONTEXT CLUES

1. Example. An example or examples may be given to make a word's meaning clear.

   I do not like acrid foods such as sour pickles and green persimmons.

2. Restatement. A word may be followed by a restatement of its meaning--either by one word or by a group of words.

   The young girl's laugh was effervescent--bubbling and high-spirited.

3. Contrast. A word or phrase may serve as a clue to meaning by telling what a word does not mean.

   Mark was surly rather than polite when he accepted the salutatorian's award.

4. Explanation. An unknown word may be explained well enough for you to determine its meaning.

   The boy's grandfather was so frugal that he refused to buy enough to eat.

5. Definition. A word or term may be directly defined. A formal definition includes the term to be defined, the class into which the term fits, and the characteristics that distinguish the term from other members of that class.

   An octagon is an eight-sided figure.

APPENDIX R: VOCABULARY WORDS

APPENDIX R

VOCABULARY WORDS TO LOOK UP

1. Narcissism
2. Erotic
3. Tantalize
4. Mentor
5. Panacea
6. Titanic
7. Venereal
8. Quixotic
9. Robot
10. Malapropism

APPENDIX S: FILL-IN-THE-BLANK EXERCISE

APPENDIX S

HERO ZERO

Directions: Fill in each blank with the appropriate vocabulary word.

Hero Zero had a _____struggle with his _____ desires whenever he saw a certain _____beauty walking down the street. He donned a coat of shining armor to impress her. At first she mistook him for a _____, but he behaved so courteously toward her that she forgave his _____idealism and began to see him knightly. One day he discovered he had a _____disease. Hero asked his friend and _____for advice, but the friend had no _____for such problems. So Hero went to his doctor, crying "I have a funereal disease." The doctor laughed at this _____, but he assured Hero Zero that there was a cure. If our hero now seems _____and wrapped up in himself, it may be because he fears any more entanglements.

APPENDIX T: VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT EXERCISE

APPENDIX T

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT EXERCISE

Using context clues, determine the meanings of the underlined words in each of the following sentences. Write the definition in the first blank. Circle the word or words that serve as clues to the meaning, and state in the second blank the type of context clue.

1. The millionaire was magnanimous, or generous, with his money.

Definition_____

Clue_____

2. A schism is a sharp division or separation.

Definition_____

Clue_____

3. Bovines, such as cows and oxen, are slow and stupid, but they have worked for men for centuries.

Definition_____

Clue_____

4. Jimmy is so loquacious, or talkative, that he can't keep a roommate.

Definition_____

Clue_____

5. Instead of being a lover of people, he was a misanthrope.

Definition_____

Clue_____

6. A protozoan is a microscopic, single-celled animal-

-one of the most primitive forms of life.

Definition_____

_____

Clue_____

7. Although our last gardener was lazy, the present gardener is <u>diligent</u>.

Definition_____

_____

Clue_____

8. The undertaker prepared the <u>cadaver</u> for burial.

Definition_____

_____

Clue_____

9. <u>Clairvoyants</u>--such as fortunetellers, seers, and prophets are not always right.

Definition_____

_____

Clue_____

10. The storekeeper was so <u>avaricious</u> he tried to cheat his customers when he gave them change.

Definition_____

_____

Clue_____

APPENDIX U: WORDS IN CONTEXT EXERCISE

APPENDIX U
WORDS IN CONTEXT

In each sentence below, one word is underlined. From the clues given in the rest of the sentence, derive a meaning for the underlined word and write that meaning on your own paper.

1. The majority of organisms are aerobic; that is they require oxygen to release the energy needed for life functions.

2. After age forty some men increase their amount of bed rest to the point where it actually becomes enervating. The man who gets more than eight or nine hours of sleep will probably have less energy than the man who gets fewer hours of sleep.

3. The term "sea" usually implies that waters are saline, but the Sea of Galilee is not salty.

4. In this kind of experiment the next step is to extirpate the median nerve cord and the lateral nerves to see if the heart beats without these.

5. The great religions all share the common purpose of producing a metanoia, a change of spirit.

6. Doctors who came in contact with sleeping sickness adduced that changes of personality were a result of brain damage caused by this disease.

7. The author may deal with a modern theme but set his story in another time in order to obviate certain assumptions about current times which his readers may hold but which are not useful in understanding his story.

8. The pictorial aspect of art may be important, but it is not the significant factor which separates mundane art from great art.

9. Many amateur artists discovered that they had latent talent once they started to paint.

10. We can now summarize our discussion by this statement; that which is used develops, and that which is not used atrophies.

APPENDIX V: VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT MASTERY TEST

APPENDIX V

TEN STEPS TO IMPROVING
COLLEGE READING SKILLS

NAME_____

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT: MASTERY TEST 8

Figure out the meanings of the following five words by studying them in context. Then complete the matching and fill-in test that follows.

1 **covert**

Spies' true work must be **covert**, so they often hide their identities by doing other kinds of jobs. Miriam and David's relationship is so covert that they never eat out. Even Miriam's parents don't know she is seeing David.

2 **facade**

The **facade** of the old department store was cleaned this summer. Now the store's brick front is an inviting orange-red.

Kevin puts on a macho facade, but inside he's really kind and gentle.

3 **ponder**

Too often we don't take time to **ponder** the possible consequences of our actions.

Over the years, Mr. Madigan rarely took time to ponder life. Since his heart attack, however, he's thought a lot about what is important to him.

4 **retaliate**

When I broke my sister's Prince record, she **retaliated** by cutting the cord of my Sony Walkman earphones.

5 **vile**

Our cafeteria serves the world's most **vile** beef stew, full of big globs of fat.

Piles of wet garbage sitting in the summer sun soon acquire a **vile** smell.

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT MASTERY TEST CONTINUED

A. Match each word with its definition.

1. covert ____the front of a building; a false appearance
2. facade ____to return injury for an injury; pay back
3. ponder ____offensive to the senses, feelings or thoughts; disgusting
4. retaliate ____to consider carefully; think deeply about
5. vile ____secret; hidden

B. Fill in each blank with one of the words in the box. Use each word once.

covert	facade	ponder
retaliate	vile	

6. When Mary told about Flo's secret love affair, Flo _____(e)d by telling their friends about Mary's affair.
7. Too many people have a child without taking time to _____ parenthood. They give less thought to having a baby than buying a sofa.
8. When he's not being a hero, Superman takes on the _____ of a bumbling, fearful reporter named Clark Kent.
9. The public knew the woman as an international business leader. Only a few CIA officials knew her_____ role as an international spy.
10. When I finally get around to cleaning out my refrigerator, I always find some _____ moldy food at the back of a shelf.

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